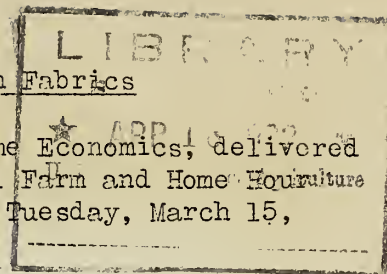


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HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR: Buying the New Cotton Fabrics



A radio talk by Miss Ruth O'Brien, Bureau of Home Economics, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour through WRC and 46 other associate NBC radio stations, Tuesday, March 15, 1932.

How do you do, Everybody?

MISS VAN DEMAN: As I promised you last week Miss Ruth O'Brien is here today to tell you about some of the new cotton fabrics on the market this spring. You know Miss O'Brien already, as the textile specialist in charge of the not Division of textiles and Clothing of the Bureau of Home Economics. So I'll introduce her but just welcome her today as the Household Calendar speaker.

MISS O'BRIEN: Thank you, Miss Van Deman. Here it is the middle of March and though we have recently had the coldest weather of the whole winter, some of us here in Washington are already thinking of summer clothes. The shops are full of new fabrics and it seems just the time for us to make a good selection.

I went on a shopping trip the other day especially to look for the new cottons. And I certainly found them. Our cotton manufacturers have produced some beautiful fabrics this season. You know in the last 5 or 6 years cotton materials have undergone a remarkable change. Instead of the rather ordinary things of a few years back, now we have really good designs. And they are made in lovely soft colors and the most interesting weaves.

I especially liked the so-called two-tone cotton mesh fabrics. Have you seen them? They are firm and strong as can be and yet pliable and soft as other mesh and netted fabrics. And what's more they come in dark dignified colors which make them just right for street wear. Personally, I have always liked to wear cotton in the office because it can be washed and freshened up so nicely. If you have ever spent a summer in Washington you know what the hot humid weather here does to clothes. But so many cotton fabrics have been light colored and with what I call trivial designs. They make me feel conspicuous in a business office or on the street. So I for one welcome these new fabrics, that make well-tailored atreet outfits.

And have you seen the materials with colonial designs that have come out to celebrate the Bi-centennial? Many of them are copied from old prints and colonial fabrics. They will add a quaint and very pleasing touch to the summer wardrobe. I saw some of these in very well-made lace voiles that are light and "summery" looking and just the thing for afternoon and Party frocks.

But as I looked over the counters, I had to admit that we still had some of the same problems with us that we always had. I saw some of the same sleazy fabrics we used find; some of the same loose weaves; the same long poorly fastened yarns. And these were right along side of excellently made fabrics -- just where they would catch the unwary. We still have to choose carefully if our selections are to be wise. We still have to use our own brains.

Now when I talk about a well-made fabric I mean one firm enough to hold its shape and with the fancy dots and figures woven in very securely. That is a thing to watch, you know, whenever the figures in a fabric are made

with extra yarns. These yarns should not be too different in size from the other yarns of the fabric, or the cloth will wear in holes very soon. And the same thing happens if the yarns one way in a fabric are very much heavier than the yarns the other way; or if some of the yarns have heavy bunches on them at intervals. All these novelty effects add interest, but choose them carefully if you expect the cloth to wear.

For instance, be careful about crepes with long floats on the under side so as to produce a crinkled-up effect. They are pretty but those long yarns catch and pull and cause no end of trouble. It certainly pays to look very carefully at any fabric before you buy it. Have you done this enough so that when you pick up a piece at the counter - you really see it? I mean do you see it as a thing made up of individual interlacing yarns? Do you read its character from these yarns and the way they are put together?

I have here in my hands a sample of a very good-looking fabric - that is, good looking if I merely consider the general effect. But as I pull it back and forth, the yarns go every which way. It is what I call a sleazy fabric. And if it were made up into a dress, it would pull at the seams, sag, and do all kinds of annoying things. About every half an inch this fabric has a heavy cord which passes under one little fine yarn, skips quite a distance, passes under another fine yarn, and so on. Those fine threads will break very soon from all the strain the heavier one puts on them. Then the other way of the fabric, I see that every half inch or so a bunch of six or seven yarns does the same thing. I can pull out this whole bunch without half trying. This fabric would be an extremely bad buy. It is very different from most of the others I brought home from my shopping trip.

Now suppose I should just run through the things we should look for in the character of every cotton fabric we buy:

First, firmness of weave; second, good balance - that is, all the yarns near the same size; third, no yarns carried over so many others that they will catch and pull out easily; fourth, all woven in figures so firmly fastened that they will stay in their place.

These are the things which make for good character in a fabric. And the world is full of fabrics of good character, just as it is full of that kind of people. Suppose we look for them this spring.

VAN DEMAN: Thank you, Miss O'Brien. These are very practical points on textile buying you've given us.

Now, goodbye, for this time, Household Calendar Listeners. Next week I hope to have Dr. Jull of the Bureau of Animal Industry here with me to talk about eggs and their food value.